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Pulpit Preaching

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Worth Quoting 2
E. Paul Hovey

THINKING IN TERMS OF THE FAMILY

Love and Duty 3
Roy A. Burkhart

God Speaks to Fathers 7
Armin C. Oldsen

The Parenthood of God 11
John W. Meister

A Little Child Shall Lead Them 14
Donald M. Risinger

A Family Together 16
Ensworth Reisner

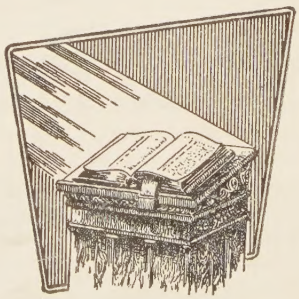
THE WORK AND WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

The Nature of the Church 20
Charles R. Hodges

This I Believe About the Church 23
Wesley P. Ford

My Kind of People 25
Maxie D. Dunnam

One Call Does All! 29
Leslie Conrad, Jr.



BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

For many years pastors have anticipated the publication of **The English Bible.** The New Testament is now available, and some of us must temper our enthusiasm lest readers consider us to be unbridled in our comments. This is a new translation, not a revision, which combines generations of biblical scholarship with an eloquence, beauty, and expressiveness in diction which is comparable among the recent translations with that of Dr. Moffatt. (Oxford University Press, 447 pp., $4.95)

Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. by John T. McNeill and tr. by Ford Lewis Battles, is the most recent addition to the Library of Christian Classics. This two-volume set warrants the consideration of even those who have not secured other volumes in this remarkable series. Here is the heart of Calvin's thought in readable prose and ably edited. For pastors who know Calvin, these volumes will enlarge understanding; for pastors who have neglected Calvin, these volumes will become a highway to a fuller appreciation and instruction in a mind no Christian ought forever to neglect. (Westminster Press, 1734 pp., $12.50)

The Harper's New Testament Commentaries have been commended previously on this page. The latest addition to this series is **The Gospel According to St. Matthew** by Floyd V. Filson. The book contains a new translation and a perceptive commentary by the author as well as very helpful

(Continued on page 19)

WORTH QUOTING

E. PAUL HOVEY
The Federated Churches
Lewiston, Idaho

In a world like our today, full of violence and the threat of death, the only person who has every right to remain undiscouraged and unafraid is the one who believes in eternal life.

John Sutherland Bonnell

* * *

You are in revolt. You hate the Church's narrowness and sectarianism; and so do I. But I know more about the Church than you do, because I live with her all the time. In the darkest places on this planet, where otherwise humanity would be helpless and sodden, you will find hospitals, schools, and spiritual agencies. They were put there by the Church.

No other organization has thought of such service in these desperate corners of the earth except the Church, and the men and women whom the Church has sent there. Show me an organization that can duplicate our Careys and Morrisons, Judsons, General Booths, and others like them, who have gone where life is darkest, where need is deepest, where work is hardest, before you ask me to give up the Church.

You will look to the Church. The noblest men and women I have

(Continued on page 31)

Next month's topics will be "Christian Behavior" and "On Forgiving and Being Forgiven."

Pulpit Preaching

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THINKING IN TERMS OF THE FAMILY

LOVE AND DUTY

Roy A. Burkhart, First Community Church, Columbus, Ohio

We have done that which it was our duty to do. Luke 17:10

Thy law have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against it. Psalm 119:11

We cannot think of Mother's Day without also thinking of fathers, of the family, of children, of the family of men and of the growth of the family spirit in all the relations of life. What principle, what spirit, is basic to the family in the home and to the growth of the family spirit?

A man and woman are married, they have children, and then all at once he says to her or she to him, "I don't love you any more; I want a divorce." The one giving the ultimatum may not even be willing to talk to someone about the situation. The mind is made up. It happens again and again that there is no sense of obligation on the part of the person to the mate or to the children, other than agreeing to the amount of the support. A few years before, this person had entered into a covenant "Till death us do part" and now with little feeling he breaks the covenant because he feels that love is gone. Why?

Perhaps because there never was real love. What the person thought was love was not love, but lust or infatuation. It is more often the man who wants to terminate the marriage. He may have a mother-figure problem, or an anxiety problem which leads him to over-emphasize the physical, or to love a "type." He needs a vote of confidence, and when once he has won it, he is ready to go to another. If it is a case of having a mother-figure, he becomes threatened when children arrive. Wanting his wife to be also mother to him, his children become competitors. But whatever the reason, he walks out, feeling no sense of moral obligation.

Look, moreover, at the larger family. Take the church. Recall what is promised when babies are christened or when we join the church. How many of us keep the covenant? When we pledge allegiance to the flag, remember what we say. Look at that in light of the failure to vote or to fulfill our duties of citizenship. Look at other areas. We agree to do some job, but we start it and never finish.

Think of the broken hearts in business because covenants are broken. Here is a situation in which a man agreed to take a job, all the plans were completed, the employer was counting on him. Then without asking to be released the man changed his mind and apparently had no feelings about breaking his word. His word was not his bond.

Look at the experience of courtship. How often a girl has come to me, broken and hurt because she believed a boy when he said, "I love you," and later found that he merely wanted a passing pleasure. I have often told our young people the story of a very wise girl who had a date with a boy who had 19 notches on his romantic gun and wanted to add a 20th. But on their first date she made it clear to him how she felt: "I have wanted to date you for a long time, but I never kiss a man until we have had 100 dates."

His reply was an astonished ex-

clamation: "You sure put a high price on your kisses!" "Big boy, they're worth it!" was her retort.

And that first date was followed by many more. It was not long until he came to me and said, "She knows who she is — I want to find out who I am." He went through the membership training, joined the church, and began seriously to try to fulfill his real self. They had the 100th date, and in due time I counseled them before their marriage. When we were together I asked her why she had not kissed him on the first date, and she replied, "If I had, he never would have wanted me." And the boy tried to tell me what she meant to him — that kissing had just been a pastime before, but now it was a sacrament.

This was a long time ago, but if you knew them now you would know that their relationship is based not on lust, not on infatuation, but on deep love. The difference between this couple and the ones whose marriage breaks up is that they came together not out of an anxiety which drove them into physical closeness but rather because they loved each other, after the spirit as well as after the flesh. As Dr. Frankl said, "They abstained so they could obtain."

So as we look at the family in a home and the family spirit in the church, in work, in the school and in the community, what principle is basic? Is it not that in every relationship we need to see the discipline of duty if we are to know its delight?

II

Is it not true that there is nothing our drifting world needs so much as a sense of moral obligation? It becomes clearer and clearer that if there is to be true freedom in the world, men must be self-governed from within. Formal laws and legal statutes will not stand the stress put upon them by men who in their inmost hearts have no fundamental loyalty to some Being above and beyond themselves.

Laws and regulations can direct and complement, but they can never be a substitute for an inwrought sense of duty that lies back of the crime wave and the breakdown of moral sanctions. The trouble is not half so much with our social machinery as with our social ideals. If one's social ideal is wrong, his whole plan and purpose will miscarry. That is what Jesus said in picture form there on the hillside of Galilee: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Get your ideal right and "all other things will be added unto you."

There has been a lot of shallow thinking on the whole matter of the compulsion of duty. Seeing rather widespread rebellion and confusion, some have been quick to say, "We must find a new standard of life; something more winsome than duty." It is one of those emergency remedies one seizes more or less blindly before the doctor arrives.

Part of the reason for the relaxation of moral sensitivity is the new knowledge of the processes by which morality is built up. People are learning the tremendous function of custom. And they are saying "There cannot be any divine will in all of this. If moral standards arise out of ageless customs, I don't feel that I am obligated by them. I shall originate customs for myself."

We don't realize that the Eternal God is speaking His will through these customs or modes that are evolved through the slow-moving centuries. We want a precipitate God. He must speak a world into existence. He must declare in a moment all the laws of life or He is not God for us. But all the time, everywhere, God is working with the care and patience of an infinite artist. As we plant the acorn and after decades it becomes the acre-covering oak, so the Eternal One has planted in the sub-soil of human society germs of everlasting truth that are gradually being revealed.

God speaks to us in the modes of

conduct we call mere customs, the fundamental customs upon which society rests. Customs, yes — but not mere customs, not casual customs, but customs evolved through ages of painful upward movement of our race. Customs drenched with the blood of souls and wet with the treasure of tears. Back of our social customs is conscience. It is native, original, and elemental. It is far more likely that conscience made society possible than it is itself the product of social values. I know that there is a difference in content among different peoples, in the categories of right and wrong; but that which, back of it all, invests right with rightness and wrong with wrongness is something native to the soul. It is the far, faint whisper of the voice of God and the universal moral authority with which He speaks.

We need today to reconsecrate our souls and our homes and our education in the faith that some things are inherently and eternally right and other things are eternally wrong. We have tried to dissect and analyze and chart our moral impulses until our souls have grown flabby and futile. We are reaping a woeful harvest from the education that has predicated a right that is only relative and an accountability that does not reach beyond social welfare.

So many people say of an action, "So long as it does not hurt me physically or mentally or anyone associated with me in the action, I recognize no other law of right." Now that may sound like good ethics, but in reality it may be very dangerous. An ethics that is only horizontal, that reaches only from man to man, is not sufficient. Wherever you have the ethics that leaves God out, you will find that soon it grows insensitive and callous as to what harms man.

Sin is treason against God. Sin hurts the universe. It delays the purposes of God and, of course, in wholly imponderable ways it dwarfs and stultifies the soul of man.

David, after he had desired Bathsheba and had sent her husband into the front line of battle that he might be killed, when he was confronted by the prophet and made to feel his sin, is thought to have given utterance to the Fifty-First Psalm; "Have mercy upon me, O God. Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned." What about Bathsheba? What about Uriah? But David had come to the place where he realized that the fundamental nature of sin is a betrayal of the universe; it is war against God. The chief end of a righteous man is to discover and do the will of God — and that will cannot be interpreted in the immediate influences of any cause of life upon one's neighbors.

There is a fine discipline of the soul in duty. There is a moral fiber that is developed by doing some things because they are right and because we ought to do them and for no other reason. I have had young people say to me, "I keep the laws of my parents, but I don't want to. And I might as well disobey as not to desire to do so."

One answer to such reasoning is that he who acts only upon the immediate dominant impulses and never does anything from superior motives is destined not for the highest self-expression but for the narrowest self-limitation. Because whether we like it or not, the highest personal freedom issues from the sternest self-discipline. Only he who has enthroned law in the centers of his soul will know true liberty.

II

Another consideration is that even love needs to be directed and motivated by the sense of moral obligation. Without it love becomes a thing of fitful starts and impulses. There is not one family in all its integrity that has not been held together by the steadying hand of duty. Love that is not consciously or unconsciously undergirded by the sense of duty will soon split up in vagrant impulses.

The home and monogamous mar-

riage have been achieved at infinite cost. It is the highest way of social life revealed by the painful progress of centuries. One may say, "O, but man was promiscuous before he was monogamous." That is true. Man was also dirty before he developed the instinct for cleanliness. Man was savage before he became approximately civilized. Is that good reason for giving up all our hard-earned gains? If we are going to base morality on that from which we came and give validity only to primitive instincts, we might as well turn once for all to the jungle for our morals. Man may have now upon his feet the mud of the swamps through which he has passed on his long upward journey, but man also has on his garments the glint of gold from some far-off destiny toward which he goes. And we cannot interpret the love of man merely by pointing to his animal instincts. We must also remember these impulses and aspirations for a higher good than he has yet attained. In these is the stuff of moral authority.

I say that love must be tempered by the sense of moral obligation. The greatest social tragedies are the result of love when it is ungoverned by the sense of spiritual sovereignty. Then, too, we must remember that emotions, even the highest, vary in the matter of intensity. That is true of religious emotions. It is true of your enjoyment of music and art. The intensity of any interest is not constant. That is true of love. There are times when love leaps up and glorifies the whole of life. And there are times when the intensity has waned and then quiet will and the deep sense of loyalty carry the lovers over to even fuller and deeper life. The road is not always on the brow of the hill overlooking vistas of entrancing beauty. Sometimes it winds through monotonous dusty valleys. But the highest hilltops are never attained save by those who have walked with consecrated footsteps the weary ways of the valleys. If the waning of enthusiasm, as we have said — if the temporary subsiding of the spontaneity of affection — is going to dissolve marriage, then the truest meaning of love, the highest conquests of the spirit, are going to be totally unknown by this generation.

One time I read this noble utterance by a very wise man with large and sympathetic views of life: "The massed experience of mankind would justify us in saying to any young couple that sets out in the career of love: 'Now hold together! Hold together even when the light seems to have gone out and your way looks dark and dull. Hold together even though it hurts.' For then in the end you will find and possess the thing for which you really long — genuine union with one another."

There is fine discipline in duty and it reaches even to love, steadying and giving constancy to what else might be its fitful fires. And any couple who stays together long enough to know real happiness realize that one only realizes the delight of duty who first knows its discipline.

III

Now let us think for a moment about the delight of duty. It is a mistake to contrast duty and desire. In their highest forms they belong together, one complementing the other. Duty followed, duty appreciated as God's will, issues in the joyous spontaneity of pure and constant love.

When love is pure it is all fused with the sense of moral obligation like the mingling of scarlet and gold in a sunset by the sea. Love begets duty. You know that. If you love someone, you owe him something. You are under obligation to him. If love has created children, it is under a perpetual obligation to the children. If love has created a home, its highest human loyalty is to that home, and when, for the sake of feeding the flames of passion, one has betrayed his home, he has betrayed the moral universe. Marriage exists for the creation and fulfillment of life, and he

who is false to life's highest laws cannot know the fulness of life. Love creates obligations. And duty followed in the days when love's flames seem to burn low, recreates and intensifies love.

But there is a place where law and love are blended into one indistinguishable whole. There is a place where we find freedom and spontaneity, not by the futile following of our whims but by having all duty and all desire fused into one experience that "controls the courses of the soul"! This is the only true freedom. And it is found only when man has surrendered at all costs to the demands of duty.

The Psalmist realized this delight of duty when he cried, "Thy law have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against it." Law is no longer an external thing. Law is now hidden, submerged in the affection. Far down in the center of love, law lies buried, but giving moral content and spiritual beauty to the affections. The great purpose of law is to become love, of duty to be lost in desire. One man who had experienced this transfiguration of duty cried in surprise, "Thy statute has become my song." What a change that is! That which used to be law on the outside is now melody at the midmost heart of life, so that the person is no longer a subject but a sovereign.

That was true of Jesus. Jesus said to his companions on the Emmaeus Road, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" The light on Calvary's height is the light of love and duty when they are one. It is moral obligation when it has become a sheer necessity of the soul's life.

On this Mother's day we find that here is the principle for friendship, for marriage, for the family, for work, for the world waiting to be born. Only when we know the discipline of duty can we know its delight. Then we find joy and wholeness of life.

GOD SPEAKS TO FATHERS

Armin C. Oldsen, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

It's a great privilege to be a father! In most places of the world and in most periods of history father has enjoyed a position of honor and respect. Far more frequently than not he has been regarded as the head of the family. There are exceptions. On an island near Sumatra the children take their mother's name and only the daughters are allowed to inherit property. There is a tribe in Bengal in which the wife has the right to sell her husband into slavery when he goes into debt. It is reported that on Palau Island the women can have any male executed if he even disturbs their contemplation. Those are extreme cases, of course. Yet, throughout the western world father does not occupy the high place of authority and honor in the family that once was his. Before the industrial revolution weakened the home, father was usually regarded as the leader in family affairs. Today the children often have traveled more extensively; they have had wider experiences; they may even earn more money. There are homes in which father has become little more than the man who pays the bills.

I

God expects far more of fathers. He wants them to be more than breadwinners. Their duties have not been discharged when they have brought home a pay check. The business of being a father takes time and energy, wisdom, and devotion. It is an art to be a real father to growing boys and girls. To be the kind of father that

children need and long for constitutes one of the most exacting challenges that confronts modern manhood. It is a godly art to be a good father and God Himself gives the instruction. God imparts His Holy Spirit to all fathers who come to Him in faith. He tells them what they are to do and how they are to do it. Through the inspired pen of the Apostle Paul, God speaks to fathers in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, in the fourth verse, and says, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is a great and responsible work that God has given to fathers: taking the helpless babes that He places into their homes and molding them into men and women of God. And God is anxious to help them.

The art of being a true father is not easily learned. But every father can learn it. The responsibilities of fatherhood can be frightening and discouraging, yet they can lead to rewards that are precious and lasting. How sharper than a two-edged sword it is, not only to have a thankless child, but to have any child of whom one needs to be ashamed. How more warming and more cheering than the sunshine it is to have a child of whom one can justly be proud.

Whether a child turns out to be one or the other depends not so much on the school that it attends, nor the neighborhood in which it grows up, nor the amusements it enjoys, nor the Sunday school of which it is a member; important as all of them may be. It depends most of all on the home in which its attitudes were shaped, its habits formed, its character built, andd its personality developed. Life is lived in its truest and fullest sense, not in the school, nor on the playground, nor in the church, but in the family. The great lessons for life are most easily and most permanently imparted in the home. And father, whether he realizes it or not, whether he wants it or not, is one of the world's great teachers.

Look at the example God has given men that they might be outstanding fathers. When God chose an earthly name for Himself, an every day expression that the lowliest of men might understand, He called Himself simply "Father." Wordsworth wrote, "Father! to God Himself we cannot give a holier name." The more godlike a man is, the better father he is. The best father to a child will be a man who is a child of God. When a man walks in the way that God would have him go, he marks a splendid trail for his children to follow.

II

God's outstanding trait is one that every man must have if he would be a good father. It is love. Without love God would be someone of whom to be terribly afraid. But God is a God of love to whom we can draw near with childlike confidence, knowing that He is interested in everyone of our problems and achievements, assured that He will hear us and help us in the way that is best. Love is basic to God. Saint John says that "God is love." It is love that made God our Father. It is love that caused God to make the world beautiful and us, His creatures, fearful and wonderful. It is love that moved God to send His Son to live on earth with our fathers, where they could see His love. It is love that prompted God to sacrifice Christ for all of us that we by faith in Him might live forever in the presence of God's love.

Love is basic in the art of being a good human father. To be a true father a man must love his children which are a gift of God's love. God says, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Children must be loved if they are not to be reared in anger. Children must be loved if they are to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Parents and teachers know that there are days

when they would do almost anything for their children, they are so lovable. And there are days when they are tempted to do almost anything to their charges, they are so annoying. There never was an outstanding parent or a great teacher who did not love children. Christ, God's own Son and the greatest man who ever lived on the earth, did not hesitate to take the children in His arms because He loved them.

It all sounds very simple, perhaps even naive. Doesn't every father love his children? The answer is a thundering "No!" Millions of men in our country annually risk fatherhood with no thought of accepting any responsibility that might result from their lustful pleasures. Hundreds of thousands of men annually do conceive children out of wedlock with no intention of giving their offspring loving care. Fortunately there are men who love children enough to care as their very own for the sons and daughters of those who are unworthy of them, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The lives of hundreds of thousands of unborn children are annually taken by abortion, because irresponsible parents defy God when He says, "Thou shalt not kill," and when He admonishes, "Provoke not your children to wrath." Tens of thousands of fathers (and mothers) annually are more concerned about what they call their "right to happiness" than they are about their responsibility to the children whom God has given into their care. They selfishly deprive their children forever of the joy and blessing of normal wholesome father love. Add to that the thousands of fathers who refuse to support their children; the thousands of fathers who did not want to be a father in the first place and cruelly reveal to their children that they were unwanted; the thousands of fathers — in fact, most of us fathers will at times be among this group — the fathers who are so busy at work and play that they have no time to show their children any real, genuine love. When God says, "Ye fathers," He implies the thought, "Fathers, love your children as I have loved you."

III

The best way to avoid bringing up children in anger is to try doubly hard to express one's love. Love is more than a pleasant feeling. Love is more than a willingness to support, protect, and educate a child. Love is more than buying a child an occasional toy or taking it to an amusement park. Love is more than a kiss and a hug. It requires no effort on the part of a normal father to smile happily at a helpless babe that is part of his flesh and blood. Who doesn't love a cute little girl or a husky little boy?

God showed His love for His children by giving. "God so loved the world that He gave." He gave of Himself. He gave His Son and through Him forgiveness of all sins and heaven forever. The essence of true father love, also for the human father, is a readiness to give himself, a desire to surrender himself, a willingness to give the best of himself, in the most important business of his life, that of being a good father. I had a letter not long ago from a young man who will spend the remaining years of his youth behind prison walls. He wrote: "My father loved me in a way. He gave me just about everything I wanted in the line of money, clothes, and cars. But I guess he never gave me himself. He is a kind of stranger to me. We never went to a ball game together or built a bird house together. He never told me anything about life or about God. I feel terribly sorry for him because he blames himself that I'm here in the pen." I wonder whether that distraught father ever heard or paused to ponder God's word to fathers, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

A loving father gives his children of himself, of his time and energy. They are more important than his

business or his hobbies. A loving father gives his children the best of his thought, that he might better understand and train them. They are more important than any sale that he might make, any business that he might develop, any book that he might write, any lion that he might shoot, any fish that he might catch, any golf score that he might make. A loving father is patient with his children. In the eyes of God, and therefore in reality, his relationship with his children is more important than his relationship with his customers, with his fellow workmen, and with his neighbors.

IV

God touches an important part of the modern child-parent problem when He says, "Provoke not your children to wrath." God placed the father over the child not because he is bigger and has larger muscles, but because his mind has been trained by experience and his heart has matured in understanding and love. Or certainly should have! No father worthy of the name will deliberately abuse his rights of fatherhood. He will avoid the stern and needless severity that was characteristic of most of the child training of the past. He will just as studiously avoid the senseless laxity that makes a father no more than a pal to his children. Avoid the things that unnecessarily irritate and embitter the children. Do not overcorrect them and make obedience difficult or even impossible. Let commands be given that can be obeyed. Be just and reasonable. Be firm and fair. Never discipline a child because you are angry, but because you are right and want him to learn to be right. Let a child know that you love him, even as you punish him, not by saying so but by acting so. Let the child grow and mature. When you properly bring up a child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, he will need always less parental discipline. He will know what is right and will do it, rather than constantly having to be told what to do.

Some of the American Indians are said to have trained their boys by making them spend a night in the forest with the wild animals. A boy felt terribly alone during the night of his testing, but when the day began to dawn he would see his father behind a near-by tree, with drawn bow. Without the son's knowledge the father had been watching, standing by to help if necessary, that his boy might learn to take care of himself.

V

"Ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is important that your children know the facts of life; it is more important that they know the facts of eternal life. Tell them about God as you tell them about less important things in life. Tell them about God's laws for right living and how sound they are. Scrupulously live according to those laws yourself. Ignore those who say that the child should pick up his religion by himself. Pay no attention to those who insist that the child must not be taught to favor any particular brand of religion or morals. Don't listen to those who claim that religion destroys a child's sense of independence.

A child is taught everything else about life. Not to teach him religion is nevertheless to teach him — quite effectively too — that religion is unimportant. It will not hurt a child to be prejudiced in favor of right rather than wrong, in favor of love rather than hatred, in favor of truthfulness rather than dishonesty, in favor of purity rather than immorality. And as for his independence, no one is truly independent unless he first recognizes his complete dependence on God. Father, make it the grand purpose of your life to prepare your children for heaven, by telling them of the love of God in Christ of God's readiness to forgive all their sins through Jesus' merit of God's desire to take them to heaven for the Savior's sake, when life on earth shall end, as it

inevitably must.

Father, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord directly, by telling them Bible truth, by sending them to Sunday school, by taking them along to church, by discussing the sermon with them, by praying for them and with them, by setting them an example of great Christian living.

There are many kinds of success in the world. The success of a father is not to be measured by the number of children he has, nor by the standard of living he is able to provide for them, but by what his grown children turn out to be in the eyes of God, their character in life, their destiny in eternity. God give us more good Christian fathers.

THE PARENTHOOD OF GOD

John W. Meister, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Scripture: Luke 15

The story Jesus told about a certain farmer and his two sons—the one a wandering prodigal and the other a faithful stay-at-home—probably contains more practical insight into the Chirstian gospel than do half the books on theology. This story makes sense to us because we know the characters. They live with us in our own home or in the house next door.

I

First, there is the prodigal himself. Who has not k n o w n him? If any family has enough children it is utimately blessed with a prodigal—and I do mean "blessed."

I don't mean, of course, to suggest anything so literal as that the prodigal always says, "Give me my share of the family bank account," and then sets out on a spree. Sometimes the prodigal does do that, but more often he doesn't leave home and he doesn't require more than his share of the family wealth.

The p r o d i g a l is generally that lovable child who simply does not fit the family mold. He finds it impossible to accept the rest of the family as they are. He doesn't feel "at home" in his home. So he consciously or unconsciously rebels against or rejects the prejudices, the ways of d o i n g things, the dreams and aspirations which enable the rest of the family to live comfortably and with a sense of security.

Over the years he accepts ideas which the rest of his family cannot accept. He equips his mind with mental furniture which appears wierd to those about him. He decides to invest his life in efforts which the rest of the family think absurd or downright wasteful. He c h o o s e s friends whom the others would not choose. He enjoys activities which to the rest are trite and boring.

Eventually the prodigal has built a wall around his life which those who love him most can neither scale nor burrow through. They say, "I do not understand him or what makes him tick." And there are no windows in the wall which open out where the rest of the family live. As a result, the child is as completely cut off from his parents and brothers and sisters as they are cut off from him.

In this kind of dreadful isolation the prodigal lives—sometimes in the same house with his family and sometimes literally shutting himself out of the house. He cannot believe that his family wants him in their circle for he cannot believe there is a place for him in their scheme of things. The invisible wall is always there. How often would the father who loves him and the mother who offered her life for him destroy that wall and unite their family! But they cannot.

Then there is the elder brother. We have all known him too. He is that boy or girl whom mother and

father take for granted. Indeed, all the world seems to take him for granted. He is always "there"—with the right word at the right time, with the understanding s m i l e and the sympathetic tear, with the acceptable ideas and the approved friends.

It is not that the elder brother never makes mistakes—he does. But they are mistakes which the rest of the family can understand and so can forgive. They are never "shocking" mistakes.

Just as the prodigal need not leave home to be a prodigal, so the elder brother need not be a stay-at-home. He may wander over the face of the earth, but he is constantly united in spirit with his family. All that they have is his—their background, their ideas, their hopes, their fears, their friends. And all that he has is theirs. No invisible wall separates the elder brother from his parents and his brothers and his sisters—that is, none except that terrible wall which cuts him off from his prodigal brother. Rather, he is merged with the family like a stream merges with the river.

And, of course, we have all known the father. Most of all we have known him. He is the parent—either mother or father—who wants nothing more than he wants the full life for his children. He w o u l d willingly lay down his life for his children if by so doing he could win for them richness of life, genuine contentment, and personal adequacy.

So he drives himself each day to the limit of his endurance in order to provide daily bread and the best possible shelter and clothing. He lays aside whatever he can to provide for the education of his children or for whatever else will help them to "a good start" in life. W h e n the children stumble and fall — however many times—the good parent seems always to be close by to help them up, to steady them awhile, and to point the direction.

This unselfish, undying, untiring concern of parent for child the elder brother accepts as he accepts the air he breathes. And the parent finds his highest happiness precisely in t h i s acceptance. For what happiness can be so full as the happiness of outgoing love? This is, after all, the best gift in the world—this gift of parent love. But it cannot be given to the prodigal. That invisible wall shuts it out.

II

We rather thoughtlessly c a l l this story "the parable of the prodigal son." When we think about it, however, we quickly realize that the central character is not the prodigal. We can almost say he is only incidental to the message of the parable.

The main character is the father. Luke has placed this story amid a collection of stories Jesus told to illustrate how the Love of God was dwelling among men "to seek and to save the lost." God's Love, he said, is like a shepherd's concern for one lost sheep. If he has a hundred sheep and one is lost he will leave the ninety-nine to look for the one. Again, he said God's love is like a woman's concern for her savings. If she has ten coins and loses one she will turn the house upside down until she finds it.

Within this context Jesus told the story of a man who had two sons and who "lost" one. God's love for us, he is saying, is that father's love for his prodigal son. The father could not rest, could not know real joy until his son "came to himself" and accepted his father's love. It was as though the boy had been dead. But once the son accepted the father's love, then the father knew unbounded joy.

And God is like that! Jesus may well have ended this story with the same sentence with which he closed the other two: "Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

III

A story as obvious as this one requires little from the preacher by way of application. This is, indeed, the

gospel! We are prodigals—you and I. We are God's prodigals—you are created for perfect fellowship with God but in spite of ourselves—or because of our ourselves—we cut ourselves off from our Eternal Parent. We want to go at life alone. We rely on our own powers and our own way of doing things. We seek our own good, or what we think is our own good. Even when we give the appearance of being obedient children of our Father in heaven we are usually suffering from intense inner rebellion. More often than not we give the appearance of obedience—of "goodness" if you will—exactly because we are afraid that we are not good enough to please our heavenly Father. Like the prodigal in the story we build an invisible wall about o u r s e l v e s calculated to insulate us from being hurt by the Lord of the universe.

But the good news of the Gospel is precisely the astounding message that the Lord of the universe is like nothing so much as he is like a father who will love his children back into the family. The incredible news of the Gospel is exactly that all God demands of us in that we stop in our fitful tracks, come to ourself, and return home. That is to say, that we stop running from Reality, know ourself and accept the eternal Love that accepts us.

Perhaps no one has described this searching, seeking Love of God and our own prodigal nature more effectively than has Francis Thompson in his "The Hound of Heaven":

I fled Him, down the nights
and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own minds; and in the
midst of tears
I hid from Him and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown titanic gloom of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that
followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet.

The poem continues to d e s c r i b e how the prodigal fled from God and how the heavenly Feet and the heavenly Voice pursued with hound-like persistency until finally the prodigal cried, "That Voice is round me like a bursting sea." And he hears it say:

"All which I took from thee, I
did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou mightst seek
it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored
for thee at home:
Rise, c l a s p My hand and
come!"
Halts by me that foot fall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?

There is someone here who has not yet "come to himself" and accepted the Eternal Love which yearns to accept him. In the name of those countless souls who through twenty centuries have known spiritual restlessness and have found peace, who have known spiritual wretchedness and have found r e l i e f, who have known despair and have found hope, who have known terrifying loneliness and have found companionship, who have known living death and have found indestructible life — in their name I bid you tear down the wall around which shuts out the Lord of Love. Stand utterly naked before Him and know that he l o v e s you and accepts you just as you are. When you do this, one more prodigal will have started his journey back home—and there will be joy a m o n g the angels of heaven!

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Donald M. Risinger, First Methodist Church, Welsh, Louisiana

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-13; Matthew 18:1-14.

The birth of a child brings to light and to life some of the greatest glories we know in our earthly existence and opens the door to a partnership with God which is the greatest of all human experiences.

The sweetest things of life come to light in the home in the presence of a little child who laughs and plays and learns and asks one question after another. How our hearts thrill to see the first step taken, the first toddling effort across the floor. It is a thrill which lets eternal light shine upon earth. We see them laugh and play and grow, and we say, as we have not been able to say about anything else, "Here is something that is mine, because God has permitted me to enter into partnership with him. This child is mine and God's." As we think over all of God's blessings, more especially as we think about the little child, our hearts swell with a tremendous glow of gratitude and thankfulness, and we determine within ourselves that we shall say and do and live those things that will be helpful to the child.

Much more is born than a baby in the birth of a child. Isaiah said, "A little child shall lead them." We have found it ever so. Against our own selfish desires, they have led us; Jesus took a little child and put him in the midst. Surely it must ever be so. And yet how sorely we abuse the children. Millions upon millions of them go to bed hungry. Millions are sick, multiplied millions are in ignorance and fear and we see the thin and trembling hands of the children from around the world, all of their colors, reaching out to the world of adults, with a trembling hope that the adults will have something for them. The adults have brought them into the world and too many times, however much we love them, we love our sins more than we love the children and we have been traitors to the high calling as parents and friends of children.

Our streets are the scenes of many ugly things as the juvenile delinquents go here and there. But as we look at them in their behavior we see that they are following a pattern of adult behavior, of examples set before them. There would be no road houses, no liquor for them to drink, and other evil things for them to do were it not for the insistence of adults that they indulge their own appetites. We see them, products of broken homes and the indulgence of adults. We hear them using foul language, which they did not invent but heard from the adults who should know better. We see them learning to hate and to lie and to steal and to kill, only because we have surrounded them with a society of sinners in which the adults set the pattern.

We do not live in a childless world, thank God for that. We have been responsible for bringing them into the world. But what stumbling blocks we place in their way. Jesus said, "It is better for one to have a millstone hanged about his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea than to offend or to mislead or to cause to sin, one of these little ones." You have heard it said that children are the hope of the world. Well, it isn't so or at least not more than half so. Parents are the hope of the world. Unless the parents do the right thing for the child, there is little chance for the child to be the hope of the world. God has put the child in our midst and said, "Unless your life and your society honor this child, only corruption and disaster can result."

II

We must judge our homes, our schools, and our churches by what they do for the child. We must judge our individual and personal behavior by what it does to the child. So high a calling as this demands the very best that is within us, demands that we be willing to give up those selfish pursuits that may endanger the life of the child, for the child is the jewel of our life. The ancient prophet said that we should t e a c h them diligently as we sit, as we rise, as we walk. We should teach them so insistently that we bind the teaching of great and true things as frontlets between our eyes and put them upon the posts of the house.

Children give us purpose for living. Children gird our loins to great endeavor as we say, "For them we must do better." How dependent they are upon us for their well-being. God made it that way; it is good for us and good for them. In babyhood and for many years following they are dependent upon us for physical things, for their mental growth and development, for their concepts, for their ideals, for their understanding, and for their spiritual development. Without us they could not enter the great inheritance God has made for them. We must make great sacrifices for them for no sacrifice for them is too great.

III

But the job is too big for us alone. We can never fulfill the job as teachers and parents of children unless we have higher partnership. As the child is dependent upon us, and as we are dependent upon the child for the fullfilment of our lives, so are we both dependent upon God for His support and for His Spirit. All the high and holy desires we have for them point us directly to God. Joy and home and hope and the future are all dependent upon how this child grows up in our midst. We need God in this life with us. And so we ask our parents to come to the altar of the church where they take a holy vow before God and the congregation to train their child by precept and example to love and to follow the Lord. But the church also takes on an obligation, when the parents stand here, to surround that home with holy influence. The school also takes its share of obligation so to train the mind and life of the child that his life can be better.

What kind of a home should we have? Deuteronomy says it should be one in which we love God with all of our being and w h e r e there is reverence for God and reverence for the child.

According to Jesus the kingdom of God is something like a family with a divine Father and an eternal destiny. He thought of the family as being like the kingdom of God, a little kingdom, a miniature kingdom of God. And regardless of the environment the pressures from the outside, and the evil influences, there is a way in which, by the grace of God, we can do something in our homes to provide a spirit and a fellowship, which regardless of the surrounding darkness will make it a place of light and love, a little portion of the kingdom where prayer is made, where God is loved, and where the child is loved. Such homes will determine the type of church we have. It will be a type of church in which parents do not send their children to Sunday School, but where they attend with them, because they too want to work and worship and learn together.

What shall we do for the children? We shall tell them of Jesus not only with words, but we shall live out the story before them. As they have led us to the threshold of life and kindled the fires of love and a great devotion within us, so will we lead them to the threshold of life eternal, and show them the love of the Father. There is a way to do this. God leads us to the heart of a child and asks that together we shall bring the heart of the child to Him. We will attack every evil which surrounds them. We

will attack everything which will destroy them. We will surround them with sacrifice and a great faith in God. Each generation is a new gift from God. Each new baby is a fresh spark from the fire of heaven kindled by an eternal love. God says, "Here is your chance to do better than you have done before,'" and our love says, "For them we will do it."

A FAMILY TOGETHER

Ensworth Reisner, First Methodist Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

And the woman took the child and nursed it. Exodus 2:9

One of the wonders of the world is the way in which a woman wins over adversity. So explosive is the instability of mankind that humanity would be splintered into a billion separated particles were it not for the deep instinct of a woman who keeps her own family together—the family of the community, the nation, and the world. This blessed instinct which binds human beings together is the tap root of civilization. Without it's powerful influence men's wanderlust would permit their roving eye to lead them into breaking families, groups and peoples until the law of the jungle would take over.

On Mother's Day we celebrate many evidences of this maternal instinct which draws people together. It is the time of togetherness when we remember incidents w h e n our mother was together with the family. Our mental images are those of a love which brought people together. On Father's Day we might think of going out hunting or fishing or off on a jaunt. But Mother's Day makes us think of the magnetism of maternal power which d r a w s together the otherwise divided interests of individuals.

Interestingly enough, Spring is the time of year when we seem to be reminded of that aspect of love which draws us together. In the springtime persons are full of pep and ginger. A young man's fancy leads him thither and yon. It is the time of year when the pastor's study is often filled with marital problems. As sure as the seasons change I know that I will have phone calls and interviews indicative of families that threaten to fly apart. Very frequently a husband will fall into that odd delusion that he is interested in some woman other than his wife. With utterly idiotic reasoning he will forget responsibilities and family and all the t h i n g s that he cherishes most and goes wandering off like some crazy young buck. Often this happens to a person who has been for years a most stable and respectable member of the community.

At such times a mother's d e e p instinct is most seriously challenged. She has to keep the family together. She is haunted by anger, frustration, bewilderment. She knows not what to do and yet in most cases some deep wisdom enables her to go through patient waiting and humiliating times of apprehension. She is intuitively able to exert just the right amount of anger and just the right amount of forgiveness so that the family is kept together. How she does it mere man will never know, and usually the world is little aware of what transpires. Outward appearances are maintained. The every day tasks are accomplished. Life goes on and the family is brought back together.

This aspect of maternal love has been too little recognized. Amongst the ancient Christian communities there was a word for it—koininea. It means "love together" or just plain "together." It is the force and the only force which can keep humanity from self-destructive war, conflict, bitterness, and atomic blast. It is the togetherness of the Christian communi-

ty where it is truly Christian. It is maternal love at it's best.

I

What is the anatomy of koininea or together love? First of all, it is ingenious and subtle. There is a story of the ancient Hebrew slaves in Egypt which tells of the ingeniousness of this maternal instinct which through love kept together a people seemingly doomed to be broken apart. After Joseph died a new dynasty of Pharoahs came into power. The Hebrews were grouped in Goshen, a frontier province of Egypt, where if they chose to turn against the Egyptians and become allies of a possible invader they would have become very dangerous to the Pharoahs. The Hebrews had increased in number so prodigally that the better wisdom of the Pharoah said that they should be enslaved and their numbers decreased. Therefore he ordered the midwives who attended Hebrew women to kill male infants. But the instincts of the Egyptian midwives would not permit this, so they gave Pharoah the excuse that Hebrew women were too quick for them and had already given birth before the midwives could be called. I imagine there was considerable delay before Pharoah learned even this.

The Pharoah then ordered that male infants be thrown into the River Nile. To avoid this tragedy a certain woman in the House of Levi took her man child and hid him for three months. When this was no longer possible she made a reed and mud basket and put her son in it and placed it in the weeds at the edge of the river. I doubt if a mere man would have had either the ingeniousness or audacity to carry out these things. What is more the child was hidden near the gardens of Pharoah's daughter. The infant's sister was also in the conspiracy of womankind to keep the family together. She was sent to watch over the basket containing the boy.

At this point Pharoah's daughter discovered the basket and the small infant. She knew the king's order and she recognized that this was a Hebrew child. She was obviously aware of the connection between the child and the young girl who came up and offered to find a Hebrew nurse. But the Pharoah's daughter, endued with the same instinct as the mother and sister of the infant, ordered that the boy's mother be hired as a nurse. So the boy Moses was named for having been brought out of the bull rushes. He was reared as an Egyptian through the subtle and ingenious conspiracy of a group of women who were of different races at opposite poles of the social scale and as different as it was possible to be. Yet they shared a common instinct. They possessed and transmitted to Moses the talents necessary to bring together an enslaved people and lead them through the wilderness to a promised land.

Years ago when I was more ignorant of the ways of God I would foolishly try to give specific advice as to how to keep families together in times of marital tension. I no longer do this. I know that if women and mothers are released from the superficialities of temporary pique, frustration, anger, and fear, and if they rely on the God-given blessings of instinct, they will in most cases be able to keep together their families. There is a maternal ingeniousness that subtly gets around a man and keeps things together. Specifically how it is done, I don't know. I question if most women know how they do it. It is a gift of God. It is part of His wonderful love—His koininea which keeps the world together.

II

Another part of the anatomy of togetherness which is so wonderfully demonstrated in motherhood I would call importunate patience. Do you recall when Jesus who told of the importunate widow who went to the unjust judge with patience and perseverance and kept pestering the liv-

ing daylights out of him until she obtained justice. Jesus said that the judge feared neither God nor man, but he couldn't cope with such pestiferous patience.

This characteristic of mothers is a thing which enables her finally to get the little boy to wash his hands and face and to put away his clothes when no other force under the sun could accomplish such a Herculean task. Some husbands refer to this tenaciousness as "a nagging wife." However, it is peculiar that most of us would not do the things we are supposed to do unless there were such nagging. We hate nagging. Like punching feathers, you bat them away and there is nothing but air. Still the feathers remain.

I'm perfectly willing to admit that nagging pestiferous patience is sometimes used as a weapon for very selfish purposes. But when it is coupled with the highest form of mother love, it becomes like an angel's sword, sharp but wonderfully right. I recall a certain woman who could twist her husband around her little finger. She would patiently nag him until she got certain clothes, a new house in a better neighborhood, a mink stole. She almost wrecked her husband and would have had there been no children. When a son was born she was transformed. All her talents for getting things done were no longer applied to her selfish desires but became transformed by her desire to give her child a family of love, character, and strength. No she didn't make the mistake some mothers do of showering things on her child and so tying him tightly to herself with what has been called maternal greed. Rather she educated her son to work toward overcoming the world.

Then polio struck. An iron lung was required. Some women would have driven themselves to care for their sons, never permitting such an invalid to fend for himself. But this mother's patience was of a higher quality. She helped bring her son out of the iron lung. Eventually he met a girl, loved her, and married her, and though he is still a cripple he has his own home, his own business, and, as a friend of mine told me of the young man: "I have never known such a patient persevering person. He must have gotten it from his mother." Of such is the love of God.

III

Along with subtle ingeniousness and persevering patience, an attribute of mother love which keeps this splintering world together is sacrifice. Now sacrifice contains no virtue, if it is merely a kind masochistic self-immolation. I visited a Mexican convent which had been closed by the Mexican government in 1938. There were the instruments of self-inflicted torture whereby the nuns whipped each other with iron-studded straps and tortured themselves with crowns of iron thorns. The Mexican government rightly destroyed such practices. If there are similar institutions in the United States, our authorities should inquire into them. For such is a prostitution of religion.

The maternal willingness to sacrifice must be done with a purpose. Otherwise it is a prostitution of the highest instincts of love which bind men together. Our Lord went to a cross with only the utmost reluctance, and then only when it's purpose was clearly defined and understood. No woman should use the martyr pose. She suffers to keep her family together when it is necessary. Then she takes upon herself the consequences of her children, or her husband, or her community's misdeeds, and makes a sacrifice even as God sacrifices that love may bind together the family.

I was told the story of a Hungarian woman who until last fall always insisted that her family and her children pay her every deference, such as offering her the chair first or opening the door for her, permitting her to go out first. Then came the revolt in Budapest. It was dangerous to go

out into the street. Her family was busy working in the apartment which had been transformed into a hospital; someone had to go for the doctor. Her children wanted to go, but each had a necessary task. One boy was chosen to carry the message. But it had to be determined whether there were snipers waiting to shoot the first person who went out the door. Without hesitancy the mother, who had always insisted that she go first, opened the door and marched out. She drew the snipers fire and the messenger for the doctor ran on his mission of mercy. Who will ever forget the power of such love to keep together humanity by sacrifice?

This is what keeps the family together through the divine miracle of a mother's love. It keeps the family of mankind together for it is the love of God, which uses the cross when necessary to achieve togetherness—koininea.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING=from page 2

chapters on the leading features, sources, setting and date, authorship, purpose, text, and themes. Any pastor who comes to know the materials in this book will turn again and again to its treasures. (Harper & Brothers, 314 pp., $5)

Jesus of Nazareth by Gunther Bornkamm of Heidelberg brings into focus the kind of penetrating studies being made on the Continent. This book was fashioned on the anvil of critical scholarship, yet unlike the writings of an earlier generation this "biography" is constructive, persuasive, and warm. It is a fascinating experience to follow the author's illuminating thoughts and to find that he does not fling a flame to destroy cherished beliefs but rather raises a hammer to build stronger convictions. (Harper & Brothers, 239 pp., $4)

John Wesley, Spiritual Witness by Paul Lambourne Higgins, long-time contributor to this magazine, is an engaging and stimulating study of the man and his message. However frequently we may read of this spiritual giant, the story never grows dull. The author of this latest Wesley volume has drawn generously from Wesley's papers to give us a vivid picture and an invigorating personality. (T. S. Denison & Co., 134 pp., $3)

Living with the Seven Words contains 47 meditations in which Christ's words from the Cross are interpreted according to a central theme for each of seven weeks. John Alexander McElroy, the author, has delved deeply into the ministry of our Lord and the meaning of his experience at Calvary to bring less familiar insights to the old, old story. The book will be a refreshing aid for Lenten preaching. (Abingdon Press, 128 pp., $2)

CHARLES R. HODGES
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THE WORK AND WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Charles R. Hodges, The Pilgrim Church, New Bedford, Massachusetts

Scripture: Acts 2:43-47

It was Pentecost, the birthday of the church. Although none in that group of disciples could see it then, that church was to be, through succeeding centuries, the major channel for the working of the Spirit in the affairs of mankind.

Not that the church was to be the only expression of the Spirit. Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen was quite right when he said that we ought never to say that the church is the exclusive channel of the Spirit's working. That view is medieval Catholicism, and directly opposed to the essential Protestant recognition that the Spirit works in many and mysterious ways. When the channels of the church are clogged with apathy, institutional fussiness, or self interest, the Spirit has always found other ways. Of this, many a hospital, many another center of God's mercy and justice, outside the direct influence of the church, bears witness.

None the less, the church, is rightly the "clearing house" for all these influences of the Spirit. It is her task to foster into flame all the sparks of mercy and justice which are struck by the Spirit from the flint of our human situation.

This sermon will be both an expository study of the Old First Church of Jerusalem, in certain aspects, and also a very topical and very direct study of our own church in 1961.

I

The first thing which impresses me about the Old First Church of Jerusalem is that it is a Unity. These people "were together," and "had all things in common." What is the nature of the early church's unity?

It is not congeniality. There is no basis for natural congeniality in this Pentecost group. There was no national homogeniety; Jerusalem, at the season, was filled with "Parthians, Elamites . . ." and so on. There is no racial congeniality. They are Jews and proselytes, and soon Paul and Barnabas are to draw into the church fellowship many Gentiles who have never been Jewish proselytes. There is no similarity of class. You remember Paul's letter to Philemon, where he tells the wealthy slave owner, "This runaway slave is also your Christian brother."

No, it is not congeniality. The lightning flash of the Spirit has welded all these diverse elements into a unity in which nation, race, economic status become irrelevant.

What of the church since that first Pentecost? We cannot pretend that she has always remained faithful to her first flash of the Spirit's guidance. There have been segregation, social stratification in the church. Yet at her best, she has been the one institution which has kept true to this ideal, and she has never remained really satisfied with less than her best.

Someone says, talk about a "lightning flash of the Spirit" is only a vague, poetical expression. Give us a down-to-earth explanation of this unity of the church. Very well; as I see it, the unity of any group, small or large, remains wholesome and strong in proportion to the extent of the group's interest in something outside itself, and bigger. I think, if you reflect, you will see that this is true of the family. Have you not seen families turn "sour" at heart when they are

merely mutual admiration societies, without larger concerns? When a family, in effect, prays the old satirical prayer, "Lord, bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife . . .," it is not long before the process of attrition goes to work on that family's unity. It begins with John's wife, of course; she is an in-law, and not really one of us; but it gradually works its way to the center of the family.

The same principle applies to the church—in Jerusalem or on our street. That First Church would never have left any mark on history had it not been gathered up into a world movement which captured its interest and concerns. Today, the healthy unity of our church is completely dependent on her community-wide, nation-wide, and world-wide concerns. It is our outreach which keeps us really alive.

II

Another mark of that early church was the "glad and generous hearts" of its people. They had a spontaneity and a "lift" which could not be missed.

What can account for that spontaneity, that gladness of heart, in the situation as we know it to have been? These people lived, as we would say, in a "satellite" country—an insignificant little province on the edge of the Roman world, ruled by political appointees in whose mind the welfare of the people always came off a poor second to their own advancement. Moreover, within that province, most of these early disciples were of the "dregs" of the population. If you and I sometimes feel futile in modern political life, if we sometimes ask, "What can one person do?"—remember these people who had not even one vote to cast in protest against the worst threats the Roman world could offer. And the very process of living, in those times, was at best difficult. The richest then knew none of the conveniences we take for granted; and these were far from the richest.

Their "lift" and joy came from nothing, certainly, in the environment. I think their joy came, first, because, in C. S. Lewis's modern phrase, they knew in their hearts that they were living on "The Visited Planet." They knew, that is, that Jesus Christ had come and dwelt among them, and that the world could never be quite so sad and unpromising a place. We might put this differently. We would say, perhaps, that the coming of Christ had shown that this world is not just a soulless mechanism, that the spirit of man is not just an accidental growth, like a mushroom in a damp spot at the edge of things.

They found a joy, too, in the fact that in Christianity the individual finds a real significance. As the hungriest are likely to be first at table when dinner is announced, so the slave and the downtrodden are the first to answer the gospel's call. There is none, however, so well off in a material way that he does not, sooner or later, come face to face with the need for reassurance of his significance in the eyes of God.

Most important of all, perhaps, these people had found a fellowship beyond pretense. The Roman world had its stratification, not unlike that of our own world. The important man was the man of wealth and leisure, the man who could command influence; others were progressively lower and lower on the totem pole. Jewish society had its layers of status, on a different basis. The top man here was the man who had the leisure to know and keep every minute requirement of the law — something which the common man, with a day's work to do, could never hope to carry out to perfection.

Much of the joy they found must have been in a great sigh of relief at belonging, now, to a fellowship rooted in the realities of personal character, a fellowship of the imperfect, who made no pretense of being perfect, yet were not satisfied with imperfection.

Is there joy and "lift" in the church

today? In a very different kind of world, the church still holds the line against any view which would make of this world a mere soulless mechanism, any "explanation" of human consciousness as a purposeless accident.

Here, strange as it may sound, we find ourselves at one with the beatnik. Strange as the beatnik's customs may seem to an old "square" like me, I must concede that he has a point. His whole way of life is a protest against the mechanization and standardization which threaten to make us all faceless elements in the mass. The life of the Christian should be such a protest, too. We, however, have a better answer. Use the potential of the Christian church to the full, and we shall bring out the distinctive and sacred characteristics of each child of God.

Like the first Christians, we may well offer a prayer of thanks that we have found a church which values each individual as a child of God, and knows no extraneous qualifications. And, where there are churches which differ from this description—and we know, unhappily, that there are such—pray God to convert them to Christianity.

III

A third mark of the church is its vitality. "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." N o t e the progressive verb form, rightly brought out in the Revised Standard Version. It is not as if a line were drawn, and when you have passed that line, you are saved. We are those who are in the process of being saved.

Whence the vitality, the potential for growth, of this new/old organism known as the church of Christ?

One reason for this vitality is that she knows herself to be "on the side of the angels." Now, don't misunderstand me. When I say "on the side of the angels," I do not mean that the church is made up of the "unco guid," the self righteous and self satisfied. God forbid! Nor do I mean to envision any sort of spiritual imperialism which would say, We have found the right way. You cannot reach God by any other road.

To say that the church feels and knows herself to be "on the side of the angels" means that, when true to herself, she has an inner loyalty which leads her in the direction of the larger interests of the kingdom of God. To use a nautical figure, when the sails are set right, the winds of God will always help, never hinder.

The other secret of her vitality is the value she places on human beings as human beings. The church may be compared to a great forest fire, which overleaps all plowed areas and roads meant to stop its spread. The secret of her expansion is the warmth at the center.

It is of the nature of Christianity to reach the next person, with concern and sharing, and then the next, and the next, in the pattern of Frank Laubach's literacy program, "Each one teach one".

This is not the hobby of certain Christians. This is not an afterthought, added to Christianity. It is of the essence of Christianity. W h e n the church has ceased her outreach, she may as well hang the sign on her door, "Out of business."

What Jesus said about new wine and new bottles applies directly to his church. When an organization ceases to serve the spirit, that organization is only an empty wineskin. The spirit is primary; organizations, however sacred, only secondary.

When a room is warmed by an electric fire, we do not spend time arguing whether it is the heating element or the electricity which gives the heat. We know that, disconnected from the source, the element would be only cold, grey metal. So, too, is the church cold, grey, metallic if disconnected from the Source of her power.

I make no formal conclusion to this sermon. As the door of our church opens onto the busy street, may this sermon open out into the activities of the days ahead.

THIS I BELIEVE ABOUT THE CHURCH

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

A cemetery advertises a package deal; mortuary, burial ground, and a church all within its walls. I've got news for them; the church comes to no one as part of a package deal. They may have a building where mourners meet but that is not a church. The church is more than a building and never a bargain. So universal is the church that every man must pass judgment upon it. To talk seriously of God and Jesus Christ and man and prayer is to be compelled to say, this I believe about the Church.

I

First, I believe the church is of divine origin. It is persons who make up its fellowship but persons committed to holy purpose. Upon Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, Jesus said, "I will build my church and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." Through the centuries the church has been tested. The powers of death have weighed against it. Wars have shattered its buildings. Demagogues have denounced it. Civilizations have risen and fallen. But the church has survived the crises of mankind bearing testimony to its divine birth.

To argue that we must preserve democracy that the church may live is a reversal of the fact. We cherish democracy and its freedoms but democracy is the child of the church. The truth is that we must make the church strong if we prize democracy. Though governments have passed, persecutions have not eliminated the church. Driven underground it has found strength. We regret present persecution but, if history is true to its course, we have not heard the last of the church in Russia or in China. Missionary effort is not wasted. Men must yet come to terms with the church for "she on earth hath union with God the Three in One."

We acknowledge the church's limitations for even though its origin is of God its fellowship is of men. God left his treasure in earthen vessels. Writing to the church at Corinth Paul said, "I fear that I may come and find you not what I wish." This is the risk God took. The church will never be free of error so long as its membership includes imperfect persons.

But the church exists for imperfect persons. The requisite for membership is the acknowledgment of sin. This is why her membership includes weak, vacillating, stumbling men. Judged by the mind of Christ the church is weak but this weakness is the hope of sinful men.

Beyond the imperfections of its members is its transforming power. Here humanity's saving saints and moral giants have found inspiration and courage. It was the church that inspired John Paton to go to the New Hebrides to lift men above cannibalism. It was the church that lead David Livingstone to spend his life in Africa battling the vicious slave traffic. The pull toward decency and honor and trust in civilization is born in christian fellowship. This is the glory of the church.

The church in the mind of Christ is essentially one, but here too her light is dimmed by divisions resulting from human limitations. It is easier to withdraw than to face in fellowship the demands of bold new days. The church has divided over creeds, forms of worship, organs, slavery, politics, buildings; always in violation of the will of God. Now the terrible potential of a divided world is forcing the church to re-examine its essential unity. Its branches are increasingly together through local, state, national, and the world councils. Only so can the church help the world to bridge national boundaries. Humanity's hope is in the church's willingness to ac-

knowledge her sin as she seeks to reclaim her birthright. The church has had her days as a prodigal but also her glorious homecomings.

II.

Aware of its shortcomings, I believe the origin of the church is with God and that this noble birth continues as a purifying influence in her life. Second, I believe the mission of the church is divine. Because it has life from God it has a mandate from God. Its charter calls for the continuance of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Here is not an exclusive society of the saved, rather an adventurous fellowship of the saving. We are witnesses, with a story to tell to the nations. Whether the nations are ready or not, we have the command to go. The spirit of the Lord is upon us, woe if we preach not.

Our mission contains a prophetic note for the church is sin's adversary. The church is not meant to settle into a complacent arrangement of coexistence with society. Her task is to sit in judgment of society that society may be saved. The Christians were spoken of as "those who turned the world up side down" and our mission is to continue that process until the world is God-side up.

Working late in the study one night I answered the telephone saying, "This is the Christian Church." A voice sputtered and I soon knew the stranger on the other end of the line was a drunken woman who had a wrong number. When convinced that she had a church she shouted, "Tell the Church to go to hell." I have been deluctant to deliver her message but it points a need. Hell is not reserved for another world; it begins on earth where sin marches, and it is for the church to challenge sin at its own front door. This includes the respectable boulevard but also main street and across the tracks.

The church is the fellowship of man and God and its mission is to enlarge that fellowship until the ninety and nine and the one shall be included. Thus it knows no barriers at the point of creed, class, nation, or race. The church is an ever increasing fellowship of reconciliation.

Our God-given mandate also includes the works of mercy. "You are the body of Christ," said Paul. Because that is true the church is assigned the ministry that was Christ's while he had an earthly body. Then he went about doing good, loving, teaching, healing, praying until men found new direction. This is God's task for his church.

III.

I believe the church is of divine origin, that its mission is divine and finally, I believe that the vitality of the church begins in worship. Here I have no language to express the urgency I feel. The church has provided humanity's best. That best cannot be passed on to coming generations without the church. Yet one asks, "Can't I be good without going to church?" What does he mean? A fence post can obey the ten commandments but the New Testament Church is a crusade and one cannot be a part of a crusade while standing on the side lines.

The church's crusade begins in worship as persons wait in the presence of God. Here the first issue is each against himself. The church against the world must follow the struggle of man against himself. The fact that one feels he does not need to face himself before God is evidence that he does! "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Because they knew their weakness and, second, because they knew the power of the opposition there was an urgency about the worship of the first Christians. As these met on the first day of the week, they broke bread, sang hymns, read the scripture, and received strength for their mission.

The world was hostile to Christ whom they proclaimed, and they knew they may not be together again. By the next Lord's day one would be stoned, another imprisoned. Their daring dedication made a larger contribution to our own day than we realize. We have not come to an ordered society by the law of inevitable progress. We have come instead to home and community because men met together to worship and went from worship purified to redeem others, cost what it may.

Writing to the Church at Ephesus, John says, "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first." Could this be us? Have we lost the glow that gave to the church strength and heart until it filled men's lives with power? So long as sin prevails every man's relationship to the church matters.

Some one asked a deaf and dumb man, "Why do you go to church when you cannot hear the service?" He wrote, "I go to let the people know which side I am on." This I believe, that the vitality of the church is in its worship, and there is an urgency about it.

I am aware that many a local congregation falls short of the glory of the church universal and triumphant. But, in spite of local human limitations, this I believe about the church; that its origin is divine; that its mission is of God; that its vitality begins in its worship; and that the conditions of our world demand an urgency in men's loyalty. "On this rock I will build my church and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." When Jesus said this he had faith in us.

MY KIND OF PEOPLE

Maxie D. Dunnam, Trinity Methodist Church, Gulfport, Mississippi

Scripture: Ephesians 1:15-23

Not long ago I visited in the home of a couple who had just moved into our community. I was there to welcome the family into our community and invite them to our church.

When we began to talk about the Church, the lady of the house unashamedly expressed her feelings about it. She had no need for it. It was not important to her. She did not want to get mixed up with the group. She wanted to be free to worship in the out-of-doors, in nature. And she wanted to be free to use her money on her pet charities without being hampered by the organization and channels through which the church's program was carried on. She could do much more by finding some needy person, some refugee, some persecuted group, some poverty-stricken home, and give her money there. I wanted to ask her how much money she had spent in such a fashion.

There were many reasons, I told her, why she should belong to the church. Only the church could achieve such an institution as a Christian college where our young people are trained in a Christian atmosphere for their chosen vocations. Only a united group of Christians within the church could reach out with hands of mercy and found the hospitals where young ladies may give birth to their babies conceived out of wedlock and are usually redeemed in that Christian environment. Only the church could afford institutions where hundreds of homeless children are given food, shelter, clothing, education, and Christian training. I could have gone on and on. Only the church could send a young couple to the heart of the Belgium Congo and support them there as they organize churches, hospitals, schools, and the like for those who are less fortunate than we. Only

the church can carry the redemptive Good News of the Gospel to the far corners of the earth.

Certainly that lady could do great good as an individual, but she could do more good as a part of a church. For that reason she ought to belong to the church.

After the conversation with the lady that day I began to think deeply about this business of belonging to the church and being a part of all that the church means.

Why is it necessary to belong to the organized church? All the reasons mentioned above are important and should convince us of the imperative necessity of being associated with the church. But there are more important reasons, and when I see my new friend again I'm going to tell her this: I belong to the church because within the church I find "my kind of people."

I.

They are my kind of people because they believe in the kingdom of God. They believe that the Christian Faith is going to triumph in the world. "Rhymes of a Rebel," by Robert Service, a book of satirical verse, light and amusing but probing at great truth, is one poem entitled "Normandy Peasant" that expresses a feeling loose in the world today. The peasant has suffered the ravages of the war and is bemoaning the evil of it. The last two verses have the defeated man saying:

They say that progress must go on
Though darkly glooms the Pit.
Ah well, my life is nearly gone
And I am glad of it.

They buy my land and millions spend
To sponsor war's red woe,
And what will be the awful end
Thank God! I'll never know.
For oh the world is in a mess,
And day by day grows worse;
I've had my bid of happiness
And now I know the Curse
Of monstrous might and speed that's blind,
And see, as fails my breath,
The doom of martyred humankind,
When Science mates with Death.

Isn't that type despairing defeat noted in the lives of most people today? I think so, but not in my kind of people. They believe that the Kingdom of God is going to triumph—not science mated with death, not the ravaging fangs of selfish men who are interested only in materialism, not Communism which certainly is manifest in threatening prominence — but the Kingdom of God, the Christian Faith.

This is a difficult faith. It is not easy to hold. There is a scene in that distinguished novel out of South Africa, "Cry, The Beloved Country," that suggests this impediment to our sure trust in the Kingdom. Kumalo, the Old Native minister, has left his beloved country and parish to go into Johannesburg, a strange and wicked city, to assist his sister and find his son. After weary days of search that yield only the fact that the son has fallen into debauchery and sin, Kumalo's friend and g u i d e, Msimangu, a minister in one of the city missions, takes him home and suggests prayer as they leave each other. "There is no prayer left in me," says Kumalo. " I am dumb here inside. I have not words at all." Msimangu watched him go up the little path. He looked very old. He turned and walked back to the Mission thinking, "There are times, no doubt, when God seems no more to be about the world."

Times do come when God seems "no more to be about the world." In such days it is well to remember the story the late Dean Inge calls to our attention. It was during the days when in the English Commonwealth Bulstrode Whitelock was Ambassador to The Hague. One night, so concerned over his country's welfare, he was vainly trying to get to sleep. Finally the manservant said, "Sir, may I ask you a question?" "Certainly," the Ambassador replied. "Sir, did God govern the world well before you came into it?" "Undoubtedly," the Ambassador answered. "And will he rule the world well when you have

gone out of it?" "Undoubtedly." "Then, sir, can you not trust him to rule the world well while you are in it?" With that the tired Ambassador turned on his side and went to sleep.

Now this is not to suggest a naive passivity. It is to suggest a faith that this is God's world, that he made it and rules it, and will in the end bring his cause to victory. That's the faith of the real Christian—and that's my kind of people.

II.

My people not only believe in the Kingdom of God and the triumph of the Christian Faith, but they also believe in love as the cornerstone of all life.

My kind of people, real Christians, do not forget the word of the Gospel: "Love . . . so that you may be sons of your Heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:44-45). In some areas of the Church, of course, this has been forgotten. But wherever and whenever it is forgotten, it is to Christianity's detriment. You may recall the ground on which Gandhi criticized organized Christianity. His complaint was not against the Christian ideal. He professed again and again deep admiration for the Sermon on the Mount. His criticism was against our failure as Christians to put it into operation and our refusal to take it seriously. E. Stanley Jones once said to him: "Mahatma Gandhi, I am very anxious to see Christianity nationalized in India, so that it shall no longer be a foreign thing identified with a foreign people and a foregin government, but a part of the national life of India contributing its power to India's uplift and redemption. What would you suggest?" Gandhi replied: "First, that all of you Christians must begin to live more like Jesus Christ. Second, I would suggest that you must practice your religion without adulterating or toning it down. Third, I would suggest that you must put your emphasis upon love, for love is the center and soul of Christianity."

My kind of people believe that. Especially do they believe that third affirmation "Love is the center and soul of Christianity." We may not always practice love, but we ought to. A real Christian does. He knows that this is the center and soul of his faith. And only this will survive.

That's what I find in the Church—my kind of people. They believe in love as the cornerstone of life.

III.

They believe, too, in the triumph of the spirit over the sword. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). "All that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52). My kind of people believe in a moral order. Man is free of course to try to live life on his own terms. This does not guarantee the results. You may recall the story carried in our newspapers on October 26, 1956. To some degree it was at the same time humorous and tragic. A supersonic Navy jet plane, speeding at 880 miles per hour, caught up with cannon shells it had fired and shot itself down. That is a parable of life. Following our own way we accomplish our ruin. Sooner or later we learn the bitter truth of James Weldon Johnson's lines addressed to the prodigal son:

> "Young man—
> Your arms are too short to box
> with God."

We cannot survive, as popularly believed, by might, power, and sword, but only by linking ourselves to God. Dr. G. Ray Jordan tells us that the American soldiers who occupied Rome in the war found George Santayana, the Harvard Philosopher, in a monastery. He was quite serene and undisturbed. When one asked him how he could write a book under the nerve-racking circumstances, he calmly replied, "The dismay that has fallen on so many minds has not touched me because I live in the Eternal." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." When we pray, not when we fight; when we commune with God,

not when we build destructive weapons; we link ourselves to the power that spins the universe. And leaning upon the spirit of God our human deficiencies are filled and we arise repaired and strengthened.

My kind of people believe that and they are in the Church.

IV.

My kind of people also believe that if the church and the Christian faith are worth anything, they are worth everything.

W. L. Sheldon said, "Happiness is a state of going somewhere wholehearted with a purpose." A real Christian is going somewhere wholeheartedly with a purpose. Christianity, at the center of which is a cross, is not and never can be cheap. Livingstone wrote in his journal: "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paying back a small part of the great debt owing to our God and Savior which we can never repay? Don't call it a sacrifice, say rather, it is a privilege." If the faith is worth anything, it's worth everything.

It was my high privilege a few years ago to visit Europe. As a part of our tour we planned to go into Brussels, Belgium, to visit a friend who was training to go into the Belgium Congo as a missionary. Going through the streets one day we came upon a governmental palace. In the square they were having a dress parade and an honor guard for the King of Belgium. It was a colorful sight and the people were excited to be in the presence of royalty. I thought within myself as I milled through that thronging crowd, this is not for me. But that evening we went to a little English-speaking Methodist Church where more than a hundred young men and women who were preparing themselves to go along with my friend into the Belgium Congo as missionaries had gathered for midweek worship. As we sang together and as I caught the spirit of dedication within their lives I thought, this is my kind of people. Later we went into Rome, the Eternal City. We were visiting one day in one of the great palaces of art. In one immence corridor I was surrounded by the busts of the emperors of Rome. Nero, Vespacian, Diocletian were all there. I thought, this is not my crowd. But then we went into the colliseum. As we looked out on that vast arena we recalled the martyrs of the early church who had been fed to the lions and burned at the stake. This was my kind of people—my crowd. We went into the catacombs, those dark caverns beneath the earth into which the Christians were driven to worship. Their writing and inscriptions were on the walls and the tombs of some of the martyrs were there. You can only pray at such a time. I thought again, this is my kind of people. But it is not restricted to the days long past or to people preparing for special work in the church. Recently I was visiting in the home of a shut-in in our community. She can't go to church. Because of the kindness of a member of our congregation I had a portable tape recorder and had taken along a recorded sermon. She greeted me with joy. Her body was frail and feeble. Her hands were twisted with arthritis. She could not grip my hand in greeting. But what joy was hers! We listened to the sermon together. Tears coursed freely down the furrows of her aged face, but she was unashamed. Her Christian testimony was thrilling and the look on her face was worth all my labors. I carry the vision of that old lady in my mind and her testimony rings in my heart. That's my kind of people.

ONE CALL DOES ALL!

Leslie Conrad, Jr., St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Richardson, Texas

Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called. I Corinthians 7:20

America is the most sloganized country in the world. Name a product of any advertised significance, and there's a slogan or a jingle for it; and in case you don't happen to know what it is, just ask your children; more than likely, they will provide you with the correct answer.

But sometimes the advertiser's slogan fits another product or program or performance better than his own. For example, "Know the real joy of good living!" Only in America could the ad-writer's stretch of the imagination relate that slogan to a glass of beer.

And where is the sports fan whose ears have not been battering-rammed with those words "Miracle Mild?" I can visualize a "miracle mild" heart attack, or a "miracle mild" recovery from serious surgery, but never a "miracle mild cigar!"

One of the most familiar slogans beamed at your ears in this area is "One Call Does All!" It simply means that one telephone call will solve all your funeral problems. Every burial-need is available on the premises. It's one-stop burial service.

In a real sense, this funeral-call may be called "The Last Call." But from the viewpoint of the New Testament Scriptures, "The Last Call," the burial call, is about as unimportant as any call on your behalf, regardless of what the mortuaries and the funeral parlors may advertise to the contrary.

They're in business to receive calls about the dead; the Christian Church is in business to extend Christ's call to the living, and extend that call often enough, and clearly enough, that the living will have ample opportunity to give a clear-cut answer to it!

Why is Christ so call-minded, so call-insistent? Let's look at the calling business in three progressive steps:

I.

Christ has done something great for you. He lived, and died, and then rose again from the dead for you personally and individually. He did not leave "his heavenly throne and his kingly crown" simply because he had too much leisure time on his hands in heaven; and it wasn't that he knew he would enjoy keeping the multitudes goggle-eyed with one miracle after another.

Christ loved you long before you became you! He came to earth as the Messiah to set up proper communications channels between God and man, so that each person might live, and move, and have his being as a called child of Christ.

Christ wants to do something to you. Einar Billing, one of Sweden's most statured theologians, contends that the easiest way to understand this point—and by the way, he contends that it is the major point—is to ponder the magnitude and the magnificence of the forgiveness of sins. Christ wants to forgive you of all your sins. Christ wants you to organize your life around the forgiveness of sins by him. Who else has offered you so much? Who else could offer you that much? That's what Christ wants to do to you. As Einar Billing contends, when you build your daily life about and around the forgiveness of sins, step number three is possible.

Christ wants to do something through you. As a forgiven sinner, you are ready to hear—and heed—Christ's call. Christ's call is always the same, and as far as he is concerned: one call does all! That call is: "I want to live my life through you! Will you let me?" It is the response to that call that is so difficult.

You see, Christ actually wants to live his life through you in the ordi-

nary duties and responsibilities of every day. Of course, the ordinary versus the extraordinary has always posed a problem, even in the life of called Christians. The call to war is so much more heroic than the call to peace. The call to martyrdom is so much more exciting than the call to everyday discipleship.

Yet, when we flashback upon the life of Christ himself, we find that he spent a lot of his time performing the little ordinary things of life—and remember He was the very Son of God.

It is the response to Christ's call that always remains difficult; and for that reason, there seem to be some reminders along the way to let you not forget that Christ has priority on your life. Sunday itself is a sort of "Call Reminder Day." "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" is a commandment that still prods the conscience and jostles the mind on Sunday, and calls to the remembrance of most folks, "Today is the Lord's Day!" Even a church bell, in a way, is a reminder—not so much that the Church is calling, but that Christ is calling through his Church.

Our text is one of the most paradoxical — contrary-to-common-sense — Scripture verses on the matter of Christ's call to the Christian: "Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called."

I can visualize certain dyed-in-the-wool "States Righters" and Elmer Gantryized evangelists having a field day with our text, twisting it to mean the States of the U.S.A. If our text refers to the States of the U.S.A., then, most congregations in these States of America are composed of numerous violators.

But that text has absolutely nothing to do with a territorial state. Both St. Paul, and later Martin Luther, emphasized the fact that the Christian who has answered Christ's call can live a "called life" and still work at almost any profession or occupation under the sun.

St. Paul himself was first and foremost a Christian called by Christ; he was secondly, a tent-maker by profession. It's a matter of Christianizing one's total life, as well as one's job; and total life includes work life, school life, church life, home life, love life and leisure life. Christ's call is to be answered in all of life.

But since the occupation looms so large in life, let's look at it, and how Christ's call affects it. By way of preamble, let me say that I am fully convinced that Jesus Christ wants every called Christian to make the most of his talents. The New Testament parable of the talents is convincing evidence that God-giften talents are not to be wasted. The five-talent person is to use his five talents—not just four. And the one-talent person is to employ all of his one talent—not just two-thirds of it.

I suspect that many of you men—and some of you women and children—read **Sports Illustrated.** A recent issue featured an article about the Claiborne Horse Breeding Farms under the managership of Arthur Hancock. Art Hancock has lived and loved horses from the day he was born. Yet, when he graduated from prep school, his father called him in his office, and without bothering to inquire what he would like to do with his life, offered him one of three choices: "Son, you can go to Cornell and become a veterinarian; you can go to Iowa State and become an agricultural specialist; or, you can go to Princeton and get an education."

Young Hancock wasn't interested in any of the three choices. All of his talents were Claiborn Farm-based talents. Nevertheless, to pacify his father, he chose Princeton, where he admits that he had the distinction of finishing last in his graduating class from an academic point of view, confessing further that the only educational feature he got out of his four years of college was that he learned how to drink beer.

The point I am making is this: Arthur Hancock could be happy, and

is happy today, breeding horses. His talents begin and end right there.

It is in order to remind you parents that your children do have talents, and that those talents—when fully developed—will fit a variety of occupations, but that every normal young person should be allowed the freedom to choose an occupation without parental interference. Parental guidance, yes. But never parental interference.

The call of Christ can more easily and more joyfully saturate a person's life if that person is satisfied with his or her occupation. If a person is dissatisfied with his work, that spirit of dissatisfaction will permeate all of life.

During the last ten years, while serving as Executive Secretary of the Luther League of America, I conducted untold numbers of polls and surveys to determine the interests, likes, and dislikes of young people. I learned that, on the average, the fathers of five out of ten young people are dissatisfied with their jobs. And, furthermore, that the young people are convinced that in most cases, the father's discouragement brims over into family relations, making them less than happy. I am of the opinion that it is unwise and unChristian for the occupational sins of the fathers to be transferred to their sons and daughters.

But what about you grown-ups who are already in jobs that you can't leave? Can Christ's call come through to you clearly? If so, how?

One method in allowing Christ's call to affect your job is to be willing to sit down and discuss the business with someone else in the same sort of work—who may be as far out in left field as you are. But only a plumber can suggest to another plumber how Christian commitment and Christian discipleship may be extended to include one's job; only a car salesman can size up his work in conversation with another car salesman; an engineer with another engineer; an office secretary with another office secretary, etc.

Christians in jobs are also discovering that it is possible to treat human beings as human beings! Christ's call—when clearly understood—forces you to look upon any other person as a creature of God.

A young man in the advertising business recently declared: "Till we formed that little group discussing Christianity and advertising, I'll admit that I was just a huckster regarding the public as a bunch of suckers. But now I am asking the question: Will I be helping people as people when I sell them this product? Honestly, they aren't suckers anymore; they're men and women whom I really want to help!" Words from the lips of a converted, Christ-called advertising expert.

The call of Christ, which recognizes the equal priesthood of all believers, was a sixteenth century phenomenon. The Protestant Reformation brought back to light the New Testament doctrine that "fulltime Christian work" is not limited to pastors and priests and nuns and deaconesses and missionaries, but includes everyone within the Christian congregation's fellowship.

I invite each of you to let this sixteenth century phenomenon that reestablished the priesthood of all Christian believers, become a twentieth century phenomenon in your own life, and learn to know first-hand how realistically one call does all—as long as it is Christ's call.

WORTH QUOTING from page 2

known have had their roots in the Church . . . When my children grow up I want the Church around them. I wish it were better than it is; but even so, I want it around my children.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

Jesus did not say, "I have explained the world." What he said was "I have overcome the world."

Leslie D. Weatherhead

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Perhaps now is the time to remind ourselves of some of the dangers of prayer. I once heard of a lady who refused to pray about a particular thing because, as she said, "If I pray about it, then I'll have to do something about it." Prayer at its deepest must in fact always be our life's endeavor to open the way for God to do his divine will. Prayer is not our way of changing the mind of God but rather His way of changing our mind . . . Sometimes we do not pray because we fear the possibility that our prayer will not be answered. But I wonder whether we would seriously ever pray at all if we felt it actually might be answered. That would be a fear to reckon with . . . Can we take God's answer to prayer in the cost of what must be re-adjusted in our thought and life if that prayer be answered? . . . Don't play with prayer. It could be God will answer you.

Donald S. Lamka

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The role of a parent is to be a lifeguard and tell the child how far he can go. A lifeguard doesn't stop a child from swimming, but he keeps him in safe waters and offers protection.

Freda Kehm

* * *

A school psychologist told me that children were like a wineglass. That if you put too much in, it will spill over. I was disgusted. Kids are like a balloon — they can always grow and expand.

Bernard Benson

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Religion is the heartbeat of the Far East. You feel it in the reflective nature of the people. You hear it in the sound of temple bells. You see it in the shrines and mosques and great pagodas, landmarks in man's eternal search for truth.

There can be no understanding of the people in the vast reaches of land east of Europe unless one understands their religious faith. The world has coined a word to explain this fact: "orientation," the act of turning eastward as in worship.

We of the West, heirs predominantly of the Judeo-Christian tradition, often feel there is but one Holy Land, the region of Palestine, made sacred by such places as Sinai, the river Jordan, Bethlehem, Jerusalem; and by such names as Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus of Nazareth. But there are other holy lands and holy prophets, age-old and greatly loved by those who are heirs of other faiths. This has always been true, but only now, since the world has been made small by the speed of transportation and intimate by the miracles of communication, are we beginning to realize that wherever man lives, man worships, and that in his spiritual quest the worshiper in the Far East is fully as devout as we are . . . All faiths, whether numerically great or small, urge their followers today as never before to live their best and do their best and come to terms with God and man. In this sense, religion is the most cohesive and powerful force for good in all the world. That it has, in its passion to win the souls of men, triggered wars in the past is a historical fact, but that it can mold an enduring peace for the future is the hope of all who, through the eyes of faith, see a new era of spiritual understanding emerging out of the dissolving barriers between East and West.

Marcus Bach in **The Rotarian**

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If the truth be told men are often willing to put their trust in a God who in the end must be triumphant, simply because they want to be on the winning side; but they are not nearly so ready to bear any part of the cost of that winning.

J. B. Phillips